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ABSTRACT

The literature on college students covers five themes: (1) financing, (2) disciplinary issues, (3) diversity, (4) retention, and (5) students' roles in campus innovations and change, although most of the literature is devoted to funding and student discipline. Most of the articles dealing with financing focus on the rising cost of tuition and strategies for paying for a college education; several illustrate the relationship between funding and retention and achievement, and the impact the problem has on minority enrollments. Only a few studies exist of how campuses address financing issues, but the literature on the impact of financial aid on students' access to higher education is growing. The second most frequently cited theme is discipline; articles focus on cheating, alcoholism, abuse in college athletics, and violations of campus code. The prevalence of literature on diversity could reflect student body diversification or a greater acceptance among researchers and practitioners of the importance of diversity; literature in this area abounds with ideas for both practice and research. Research on retention continues to be well represented; researchers have explored how first-year residential experiences, use of health services, use of alcohol, and composition of the faculty by gender and race all affect student attrition rates. (JM)

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Higher Education Trends (1997-1999): Students

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Higher Education Trends (1997-1999)
Students

by Adrianna J Kezar

The percentage of the literature on students is slightly lower than in earlier years. The majority of the literature on this topic tends to be oriented toward research rather than practice. The literature contains five main themes:

1. *Financing college,*
2. *Disciplinary issues,*
3. *Diversity,*
4. *Retention, and*
5. *Students' role in campus innovations and change.*

The majority of literature focused on two topics: funding and student discipline. These appear to be the areas of greatest concern for administrators, policy makers, parents, and students. With regard to funding, the main theme is the rising cost of tuition and strategies to pay for a college education (Henderson; St. John et al.; Smith 1995). The burden of dealing with rising costs tends to be on students rather than on institutions. Several studies illustrate the relationship between funding and retention and achievement (Hartle; King; Luan and Fenske.) The literature also notes the significant impact the problem has on minority enrollments in particular (Taylor). These articles describe how declining funding, changes in loans and financial aid, and the increase in students' work on campus have impacted access (Levine and Nidiffer). Some suggest the current concern over financial aid has been blown out of proportion and is not supported by the research (Baum). The result of the concern over financial aid is a proliferation of guides and Web sites on how to obtain funding for college (Schlachter and Weber). Only a few examples exist of the ways campuses are addressing the issue of managing costs and declining financial aid, but the literature is growing on the impact of financial aid on students' access to higher education and learning. The subject should continue to be a focus for research over the next several years. It would be helpful if institutions that have begun implementing programs to manage college costs share this information for all campuses' mutual success, something that appears not to be happening yet.

The second most frequently cited theme is discipline. Articles focus on cheating, alcoholism, abuse in college athletics, and violations of campus codes (McCabe and Trevino; Robinson and Pieronek). Concerns about discipline relate to other themes discussed in several articles, including a rise in the number of honor codes as campuses attempt to address the growing problem of cheating, and the issue of privacy and protection of students' records as parents fight to have access to students' records so they can become involved in the process of discipline (Nuss; Rhinehart). The majority of the research involves identifying problems, not on testing strategies or solutions like honor codes. Research on successful strategies and evaluation is an important direction for future research.

The prevalence of the literature on diversity could reflect the student body's diversification

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(more than the faculty or administration) or a greater acceptance of the importance of diversity among researchers and practitioners working with students. Topics include successful recruitment programs (Rodriguez), the success of first-generation students (Terenzini et al.), the impact of prejudice and discrimination on first-generation college students (Nora and Cabrera), students' views on affirmative action (Lipson), women and minorities in science and engineering programs (Civian and Schley), the adoption and testing of new teaching and learning strategies with underrepresented and at-risk students (Childers; El-Hindi Stallworth-Clark et al.), mentoring and advising programs for women students (Dickey), and modifying programs to meet the needs of disabled students (Reichgott). Although the literature on making campuses accommodate the needs of a diverse student body has increased, the actual number of minority students has begun to decline rather than continue to increase in recent years, which many predicted or expected (Borden; Taylor). The literature in this area is replete with ideas for both practice and research.

A traditional topic for research on students ---retention -- continues to be well represented. Researchers have explored how first-year residential experiences, use of health services, use of alcohol, composition of the faculty by gender and race, and prematriculation and first-year programs, among others, affect students' rate of attrition (Cavendish; Kanoy and Bruhn; Robst et al.; Shepard et al.). A few studies focus on more comprehensive models of student retention. For example, Leonard J. Kelly describes applying Astin's I-E-O model to student retention. The literature on retention also heavily emphasizes women in nontraditional fields and minorities. An important new direction for the literature is studies that have begun to explore issues for specific minority groups, e.g. Asian Americans and Hispanic students or even differences between Koreans and Japanese students, which traditionally have been lumped together (Velasquez).

Several scholars address how changes on campus affect students, including new technologies, assessment (Newport; Pike), and new pedagogies, such as service learning (Bringle and Hatcher). Students are conceived of as agents of change, not just groups being acted upon. At times they facilitate change (as in the introduction of technology), and at other times they resist it (as with new pedagogies) (Child and Williams; Gilbert). The majority of this literature consists of opinion pieces or experiences rather than empirical or systematic studies. This gap in the research literature should be addressed so that systemic change can be better understood.

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